SOCIALIST STUDIES

No. 39 Spring 2001

ELECTION MANIFESTO: SOCIALISM NOT CAPITALISM

WHY SOCIALISM?

FREE MARKET FALLACIES

THE SWP: AN EALING COMEDY

COMMODITY FETISHISM

THE END OF HISTORY

ARMCHAIR PHILOSOPHERS

FARMING IN CRISIS

OBITUARY - JAMES D'ARCY

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
THE SOCIALIST PARTY
OF GREAT BRITAIN

Communications to: General Secretary,
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

SOCIALISM NEEDS YOU!
AND YOU NEED SOCIALISM!

The Problem

Without Socialists there can be no Socialist political organisation and no Socialism. The Socialist Party of Great Britain needs members in order to carry out Party work. We need writers, speakers and distributors of our journal, Socialist Studies, and other Party literature. We need committed Socialists who reject capitalism and accept the urgent need for a new society based upon production for direct social use, not for profit. And we need members who understand and will be prepared to defend the SPGB's Object and Declaration of Principles.

The Solution

The solution is simple. If you agree with our analysis of capitalism, the Socialist objective and the political means required to establish common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society, then you are already a Socialist. But individual Socialists cannot alone make a marked impact upon Capitalism. The struggle for Socialism has to be an organised one and this requires collective action by the working class.

This is why a Socialist political party is vitally important. It focuses attention on the struggle and enables workers to act with unity and strength. If you are a Socialist then the next step is to join the Socialist Party of Great Britain. We are not a sect or a cult. There are no intellectuals in the Party, only intelligent men and women who share the same commitment to Socialist ideas and Socialist objective. However, we only want members who understand the Socialist case and if you do agree with us then we want you as a member.

What Next?

If you agree with the Socialist case then the next step is to apply for membership. We are not leaders. No one will tell you what to do and to think. All we expect is political activity and enthusiasm to work with other Socialists to achieve the establishment of Socialism. The Socialist Party of Great Britain will be the single most important political party you will ever make. One more Socialist is one less worker voting for capitalist parties like the Labour Party, Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. A Socialist party with a growing membership will make an increasing impact on the political class struggle. If you want to end poverty, unemployment, exploitation, war, poverty, discomfort and inequality then you should seriously consider joining us. **ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP** to: The Socialist Party of Great Britain, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park, London N12 8SB.

ELECTION MANIFESTO: SOCIALISM NOT CAPITALISM

Before the 1997 election Blair said: *"people want honest politics, and they are going to get it"* (quoted in House of Commons, 9 July 1997). But what they wanted and what they got were poles apart. The Blair government has delivered umpteen U-turns: from pensions to prisons, from railways to *"rough sleepers"*, from student grants to sales of arms - you name it, and the people who campaigned over that issue were disappointed. Promises met the bitter reality of capitalism and were broken.

"Education, education, education" said Blair. The school system is in crisis. Droves of teachers have left teaching and the shortage of teachers has reduced many schools to a four-day week or classes forced to share a teacher. *"Britain has 400,000 teachers in its classrooms, and 400,000 who are not"* (**Observer**, 10 December 2000). The announcement that *"the day of the bog-standard comprehensive is over"*, when comprehensives had been a 'core' Labour policy for decades, contrasted with Blunkett's guarantee: *"no selection either by examination or interview under a Labour government"* (Labour Conference, 1995). Workers under capitalism get schooled for employment and future exploitation. Only the rich get educated for a life of privilege.

Likewise the NHS with its rising staff shortages - 1,000 GPs and 14,000 nurses are needed (November-December 2000). The promise of shorter waiting lists has mysteriously become the reality of longer waiting times, ie you have to wait longer before seeing a consultant and joining the waiting list. Capitalism cannot meet the needs of all society.

The government declared war on 'poverty': they renamed it 'social exclusion'. But the reality of increasing poverty resulted in 55,000 winter deaths of pensioners from *"cold-related illnesses"* (December 1999-March 2000), the highest such figure since 1976 (**Observer**, 26 November 2000).

As for "*welfare*", the cuts in lone parent benefit and for the disabled were as a throwback to Malthus:

> "*The decision to cut benefit for single parents is rooted in the Malthusian doctrine that such social generosity encourages the feckless to have children on the state. The workfare drive in the US and the welfare to work programme here are similarly grounded in Malthusian worries about the perverse long-run impact of welfare in creating dependency*".
>
> (**New Statesman,** 9 January 1998)

What of the unions? Precious little for them. Even on the much-vaunted national minimum wage, this was set well below what the TUC regarded as a suitable 'minimum' and excluded most of the young. As Blair said, repeatedly, his party is the party of business:

> "*Enterprise should be encouraged through a good climate for business and a tax system which rewards success, and an active welfare state that moves people off benefit and into work ... It is this Government that has cut capital gains tax. We have been listening to business.*"
>
> (Speech, CBI dinner, 17 May 2000)

Whilst none of the restrictions imposed on unions by the Tory reforms have been lifted by Labour, the new law 'guaranteeing' union recognition is hedged about with conditions. As Blair wrote: "*Even after the changes we propose, Britain will have the most lightly regulated labour market of any leading economy in the world*" (Foreword: **Fairness at Work**, White Paper 1998). In the class struggle Labour sides with the capitalist class.

New Labour is proud of its close association with big business. Its party conference attracts "*sponsored meetings, sponsored receptions, even a commercially sponsored conference badge ... It is the world of lobbying and access*" (**New Statesman,** 2 October 1998). Labour was expected to put an end to the 'sleaze' of the Tory government. Instead, they operate with a superb

disregard for potential conflicts of interest. Directors of companies which stand to benefit from government contracts are appointed to head advisory and regulatory task forces. In his Fat Cats Directory, George Monbiot listed a large number of such businessmen and their 'public service' influence (Monbiot, **The Captive State**, pp 208-224). Labour relies increasingly on donations from business to help it into power for another term. Labour, the party of capitalism.

Whilst the CBI continues to urge further cuts in the 'tax burden', Labour have actually reduced corporation tax to 30%. According to Gordon Brown, this is: "*the lowest rate of any major country in Europe and the lowest rate of any major industrialised country anywhere, including Japan and the United States*" (Speech, CBI Conference, 1 November 1999).

After the 1997 election, among the first to lobby the new government was British Aerospace, anxious to protect their arms sales to 'unethical' countries. About two-thirds of B.Aes all-time high order book of £19 billion was from 'defence' exports, and a lot of this was down to the al-Yamamah deals, fixed by Mark Thatcher and his mother in 1993, under which B.Ae exports military aircraft to Saudi Arabia (**Times**, 17 July 1997). Labour has to pursue the interests of British capitalism abroad even if it means war, death and destruction.

Labour's 1997 Election Manifesto pledged that:

> *In government, Labour will not issue export licenses for the sale of arms to regimes that might use them for internal aggression. Nor will we permit the sale of weapons in circumstances where this might intensify or prolong existing armed conflicts or where these weapons might be used to abuse human rights.*

And the reality? Arms sales to Indonesia continued, including 'riot control agents' and rapid-firing machines used in 'Operation Finish Them Off' in East Timor, in 1997, just when Foreign Secretary, Robin 'ethical' Cook was visiting

Suharto (John Pilger, **New Statesman**, 15 May 1998). The 1998 Sandline affair exposed the dirty scandal of sanctions-busting by British firms supplying arms to both sides in Sierra Leone's "*diamond war*". Sandline, a London-based mercenary outfit, "*insisted ... that its operation had the full support of the British government*" (**Sunday Times**, 19 November 2000).

Those who voted Labour in 1997 may well be dismayed and disappointed by the contrast between rhetoric and reality, promise and performance. That 'New Labour' is so blatantly the party of Big Business, no longer even paying lip-service to its roots in the trade union movement, is not a bad thing. As Socialists argued, decades ago, Labour has nothing to offer the working class.

> ***Today [Labour] has nothing to offer, but a few vague promises on the one hand, and fulminations against the Tories on the other. So topsy-turvy is British politics today, and so indistinguishable the basic policies of both Tories and Labourites, that it is often hard to tell from the contents of speeches, without first looking at the name, whether it is a Tory or Labourite speaking.***
>
> *SPGB, **Questions of the Day**, 1953*

Socialists have never seen the Labour Party as other than a capitalist party, which in government has conscripted workers, has boosted arms production, has used armed force to crush strikes, and has always been a reliable tool of the capitalist class. That interest lies in the abolition of the class system, which requires the class-conscious support of workers, world-wide, determined to end the wages system and establish Socialism.

Socialists urge workers not to waste their vote on the parties of capitalism - Labour, Tory and Liberal Democrat. Use your vote constructively in your own interests: **TO ABOLISH THE WAGES SYSTEM** and not to support capitalism.

WHY SOCIALISM?

"Confusion is undoubtedly the strongest weapon in the capitalist armoury. The fraudulent Labour Party, without a single measure on their programme that can benefit or interest the working class, lends itself to Tory and Liberal politicians as a Socialist "chopping block." So said the **Socialist Standard** in July 1913 and to this day the smoke screen of gibberish constantly perpetrated by the capitalist parties obscures the class nature of society, and the antagonisms and social problems that arise because of this.

Every proposition and distracting issue is debated over and over except the most important one: the urgent necessity for the establishment of a new classless society, Socialism - now. The interest of the working class lies in the immediate establishment of Socialism, and this is the one and only aim of the SPGB. We are not for being fobbed off with the "*immediate demands*" of the "*something now*" brigades who have marched backwards and forwards in confusion across the social reform parade ground only to end up where they started. These "*realists*" have had more than one chance to find solutions to capitalism's social problems and they have failed miserably. Now is not the time to be disillusioned. It is the time for these "*realists*" and all other workers to study the case for Socialism and realise its validity.

Capitalism is the predominant system of society in all countries throughout the world. Although the actual ratio varies a little from country to country it was estimated that in Britain about 72 per cent of the wealth was owned by 10 per cent of the population - the capitalist class (see **Hansard** 5th July 1973). The figure is much the same today. Included in this figure are the means of producing, reproducing and distributing wealth - factories, mines, transport systems, communications systems, etc. Those who do not own the means of production, the working class, must of necessity sell their labour power, skilled or unskilled, to an employer for a wage or a salary. The great majority of the so-called "*self employed*" are also members of the working

class. This class forms the majority of society and is composed of all wage and salary earners, not just industrial workers but also those who would like to think of themselves as "*middle class*". It is through the labour of the working class alone (plus raw materials) that all the new wealth of society is produced and yet this wealth belongs to the capitalists who produce nothing and are socially a useless and parasitic class. As Engels so clearly put it:

> "*The capitalist has no further social function than that of pocketing dividends, tearing off coupons and gambling on the stock exchange*" (**Socialism, Utopian and Scientific**).

Apologists for capitalism often argue how necessary (and no doubt kindhearted) the capitalist class is to society by providing, at great costs to themselves, the capital for investment in new factories, ventures, and so on, thus providing work for the workers, and as a mere by-product, profits for themselves. The workers should be grateful that there are such far-sighted investors, otherwise they would be without jobs! Probably many capitalists like to think of themselves in such a lofty manner, but the socialist perspective shows clearly that the motive behind any new (or existing) business investment is the realisation of profit. No profit, no production.

However profitable capitalism is, there always exists some unemployment, less in a boom and more in a depression. Individual capitalists (or groups of them represented by companies) invest not to provide work for others, but to gain profit or a "*good return*" on their capital.

Capital constantly seeks to expand and stretch its grasping tentacles into every conceivable avenue of social life in the process engulfing smaller capitals than itself. The real needs of human beings are not taken into account when the only motive behind investment is the realisation of profit and the creation of new, greater capital for reinvestment. As long as the profit motive is the driving force behind production the needs of the working class cannot be met.

Capitalist production inevitably leads to myriad social problems, all of them insoluble within capitalist society and of course suffered mostly by the working class: poverty, unemployment and periodic wars.

Historically, capitalism has had a useful role in that it has driven the technical development of the means of production so that production is now carried out on a vast scale, world-wide. British workers can eat Spanish tomatoes or New Zealand lamb and kick Indian footballs, although many cannot afford them. The capitalist class care not a hoot where they invest their capital as long as they are assured of a "*return*" plus the stake in the original investment, so that next year's "*return*" is also assured. Individual capitalists or groups of capitalists only invest where they sense a profit. However capitalism has outlived its usefulness in being able to produce things in abundance as production is now fettered to the market place. If you can't sell at a profit, then you don't produce it in the first place. Within capitalism there is no overall control of production and as a result there is a general anarchy of competing capitals chasing after the surplus value produced by the working class.

The only alternative to capitalism is the establishment of world-wide Socialism, where society as a whole will own in common and control democratically the means of production and distribution. Common ownership means that individual members of society will have free access to what they need without any regard to the exchange system now, represented by the rationing of wages and salaries.

As Socialism can only be brought into being by the political act of the majority of people wanting it and working for it, we assume that the majority would want to co-operate in running and maintaining the social system. To this extent democratic control would be essential, and decisions would be based upon the best available information, unlike the culture of confidentiality and secrecy that capitalism depends on. Society will make decisions in its own best interests, unlike today. Socialism will certainly have its problems but compared with the madhouse of capitalism it will be a sane society. Socialism will be the beginning of civilised history before which all societies will be classified as primitive.

FREE MARKET FALLACIES

John McMurty, professor of philosophy at the University of Guelph, thinks he has discovered the cause of the world's ills and has the answer to them. We shall deal with his idea of the cause first. In an internet article entitled "**Free Market Fallacies**" he puts the blame on the "*unfettered free market*" which "*tends to destroy the resources of life and freedom for the majority, to benefit mainly a small wealthy minority, and to leave most people with little but their own work to live by, and increasing tens of millions without even that*". After continuing in this vein for another three paragraphs he sums up thus "*globalised free trade has brought us to the age of disposable humanity*".

This is a superficially plausible viewpoint held by many workers. At least it shows that the professor realises that there is something seriously wrong with the world and has a desire to put things right. However, plausible or not, it is fundamentally wrong, and the wrong thinking behind it spills over into the solution he offers, as we shall see.

Neither the "*unfettered free market*" nor "*globalised free trade*" are causes of the situation McMurty deplores. The cause is capitalism itself, not the particular way it is administered. In fact, an unfettered free market is a Utopia which few if any capitalists actually want. How much support would there be for the abolition of patents or intellectual property rights? Ironically McMurty himself complains at the cost to the nation state of protecting the patents of foreign owned companies, ie protecting the interests of one set of capitalists at the expense of other competing capitalists. Nor is globalised free trade a new phenomenon, the global nature of capitalism having been recognised by Marx and Engels as early as1848 in the **Communist Manifesto**. Both the world wars of the last century were testimonies to the global nature of capitalism and the refusal of national groups of capitalists to confine their operations to their 'own' areas.

Our quotes from McMurty's article, in which he lists capitalism's evils, are basically no different from the observations of Socialists, and even some who were really no more than reformists, back as far as the 19th century, except that they identified capitalism itself as the cause. It is unfortunately only too predictable, having identified the free market and free trade as the causes of the world's problems, what solution we will be offered. "*The solution is to institute a 'rule-based international economy'*" he tells us. These rules are to include "*minimum standards to protect workers' wages, health and safety, to safeguard the environment against pollution ... and provide a social safety net for the unemployed, the old (and) the infirm ....*" He proposes that these '*effective international rules*' must be included in trans-national trade agreements to bind corporations to '*wider interests than their own profits*'. He thinks that this will force the capitalists to comply in order to continue to have access to the markets covered by the agreements. The one point in McMurty's favour, and it is indeed a very small one, is that he recognises that his 'solution' must be applied worldwide to overcome, so he hopes, the ability of capital to switch investments to other parts of the world.

Having said that, however, we have to ask where the professor has been all these years! How does his programme differ significantly from those put forward by reformers throughout capitalism's life? Note that the wages system is to continue, so too unemployment; doubtless seen as incurable as indeed it is as long as capitalism lasts. In other words, McMurty sees no alternative to capitalism, but in the reformist mode thinks that governments can control capitalism instead of being controlled by it. Competition between capitalist groupings is an integral part of the system so the idea of lasting agreement between them is moonshine. Even the supporters of European integration merely want to create a more powerful group in order to better compete against rival groups such as the American block. As long as the working class continues to accept capitalism, support for McMurty's ideas is likely to be patchy. Workers are reluctant to take risks with the competitive position of the firms they work for, for fear of becoming unemployed.

McMurty sees the ideas of free market and free trade supporters as akin to those of fundamentalist religious sects, sticking to old dogmas and blind to the contrary evidence that has accumulated over the years. But could not this be said just as truly of him and those who think like him? The history of reformism in all its guises throughout the past century shows its total failure to control capitalism and make it operate in the workers' interests. McMurty ignores all this; next time it will be different, he thinks. The SPGB think differently. As long ago as 1904 we, through our Marxian analysis of capitalism, could foresee the inevitable failure of the reformist project. It is sad, after a century that has so conclusively vindicated our position, that ideas like McMurty's are still being propagated.

Capitalism Causes Crime

Unemployment "*will boost crime rate*" was recently admitted by Christopher Nuttall, the Home Office's Director of Research. He said:

The largest single determinant of the crime rate is the state of the economy. If the economy starts to cool off, this will have an impact on recorded crime rates (**Independent**, 18 September 1998).

For years defenders of Capitalism have claimed they can solve the problem of crime, while Socialists argue that crime and unemployment are by-products of the wages system. Now, after exhaustive research, the Socialist argument has been confirmed. What Mr Nuttall will not say is that crime is inevitable where there is private property, or that only the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism can put an end to trade depressions and mass unemployment

THE SWP:
AN EALING COMEDY

The Socialist Workers Party recently tried to get Mark Thomas, the standup comedian, to join their organisation. Apparently the SWP felt they lacked humour. Mr Thomas declined. And he gave this reason. Since the SWP were going to attack the armed forces of the state he wanted a gun. They said he was being "*juvenile*". They thought the proper way to start a revolution was to cry out "*Socialist Worker*" and bore the police to death.

The Socialist Workers Party leadership believes that the working class will spontaneously rise up against capitalism. The SWP do not notice that at demonstrations and other similar events the police and soldiers are all *"tooled up*" with weapons of violence not just now and again but always. As Mark Thomas pointed out, the police and army have "*barking dogs on leashes, shields, batons, guns and trucks*". Unlike spontaneity it "*smacks of preparation*".

According to the SWP's childish theory of revolution the workers are going to run at the police shouting "*get them*". The SWP's revolution is like something out of an Ealing Comedy. The army will rush down the street, armed to the hilt, to be met with some youngsters in short trousers armed with catapults, marbles and magnets. What a farce. It is no surprise to learn that the SWP's leadership is full of academics. Their heads must be in cloud cuckoo land.

In the real world, a Socialist revolution would first depend on there being a majority of workers understanding and desiring Socialism. No Socialist majority, no Socialism. And a Socialist revolution has to be directed at securing the machinery of government through parliamentary action.

The use of Parliament for any political means is anathema to the SWP leadership although they tell workers to vote Labour at elections. But, then, Socialists find the SWP leadership little more than political children who

have not grown up. They are like the teenage fantasists in Lindsay Anderson's film "**IF** ..." living out a fantasy world of violent insurrection.

If there was any spontaneous eruption on the streets against the forces of the state we can be assured that the SWP leadership will be safely attending a seminar on Gramsci at a provincial university to be followed by a tray of canapes and glass of smart white wine. No such bourgeois luxury for the workers facing batons, tear gas and mace. An Ealing comedy? More like a black comedy.

UNITED FRONT FOR CAPITALISM: THE SWP - 2

Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein, two leading members of the Socialist Workers Party, wrote **The Labour Party: A Marxist History** (1996). It purports to be a Marxist account of the Labour Party. It isn't.

What it does do, however, is to throw light on the current politics and tactics of the SWP.

In the conclusion the authors call for a "*united front*" of revolutionaries and reformists. They state:

> *... the advent of a Blair government, combining soaring expectations and years of growing frustration over mass unemployment and decaying public services means that revolutionaries (sic) may have an opportunity to relate to the mass of reformists in practical struggle*

and they go on to conclude:

> *Whether formally organised or not the Bolshevik tactic of the united front remains valid (p 432).*

Valid for whom? The Bolshevik tactic of 1917 created the foundation for a totalitarian state, which brutally acted against the interests of the working class. State Capitalism proved to be an unmitigated disaster and Lenin's ideas an anti-Socialist poison.

Yet the SWP still carry on with this discredited "*Bolshevik tactic*". An example of the United Front was recently seen in the formation of the misnamed Socialist Alliance, which set out a wide range of social reform policies in the hope of attracting support in the elections for a London Assembly. Paul Foot, of the SWP, was one of its candidates. Empty promises were thrown out to the electorate. There was no Socialist programme. And there was no Socialist objective.

To scare readers into supporting the SWP's tactic of a united front we are told by the authors that:

> *The edifice of capitalism is rotten and crumbling. If it is not demolished it will cave in upon all of us.* p 433.

As the Socialist Party of Great Britain has demonstrated in our pamphlet - **Why Capitalism will not Collapse** - the SWP's claim is untenable. Capitalism can only be abolished by the conscious and political action of a Socialist majority through a principled Socialist political party. Capitalism will not collapse and nor can it be reformed to run in the interests of all society.

The SWP's devious policy is to admit that they are not about creating Socialists. Workers, they believe, can only ever reach reformist awareness. For the SWP, workers can only ever become angry about capitalism. And because capitalism cannot deliver adequate reforms, the SWP thinks it can tap into the consequent frustration and resentment by non-Socialist workers against capitalist politics. But that is not the same as helping workers develop class consciousness needed to overthrow capitalism and establish Socialism.

Learning nothing from history, the SWP believes that a "*united front*" will repeat the success of the Bolshevik's coup d'etat in 1917.

Their underhand tactics can be seen in the following passage. Rather than criticising reformist politics they say:

"*revolutionaries must propose joint activity with reformists*". P 432

But they then go on to argue:

"*Revolutionaries work simultaneously with and against reformists.*" p 432

This is devious and parasitical politics. Devious because the politics of the SWP is not transparent. It hides its true intent. Its leadership lurks, shark-like, just below the surface. And it is parasitical because the SWP's politics leaches onto reform movements for its own anti-working class end.

However, the danger of the SWP lies in its Leninist politics. It has no Socialist objective. It does not intend to abolish the wages system. It does not exist to create a Socialist majority within capitalism as a precursor to establishing Socialism. It has an unelected leadership. It rejects parliament as a necessary route to gain control of the machinery of government. If the SWP's politics were successful it would not lead to Socialism but the retention of capitalism

What of reforms? What is the Socialist response?

The SWP has always rejected the Socialist Party of Great Britain's insistence on first convincing workers of the necessity for Socialism. Instead the SWP puts forward reform proposals in order to gain working class support in a bid to gain political power. The SWP forgets that a party, which rises to power, backed by non-Socialists on a reformist programme, no matter how "*revolutionary*", can only administer capitalism. The fate of the Bolsheviks under Lenin is proof of this.

Socialism cannot be imposed on workers. Nor by underhand tactics like those proposed by the SWP. Socialism has to be freely and voluntarily entered into. A programme of reforms through a "*united front*" is worse than useless to a Socialist party.

We stand by our historical record. In our pamphlet **Questions of the Day** (1969) we wrote:

> *The Socialist Party will not barter its independence for promises of reform. For no matter whether these promises are made sincerely or not, we know that the immediate need of the working class is freedom from exploitation, which can only be achieved through the establishment of Socialism.*

CENTRALIST LEADERSHIP: THE SWP - 3

The Socialist Workers Party is a party of the leaders and the led, of the wolves and the lambs. The SWP is not democratic. It has, according to one of its leaders, Chris Harman, "*a centralised leadership*" (**How Marxism Works** - p 63), a secretive leadership that "*takes day-to-day decisions*" to the exclusion of the rest of the membership. Ordinary members of this despicable and opportunist organisation, that is, the poor sods who sell **Socialist Worker** and shout out inane slogans at demonstrations, are told what to do and how to think.

Outside the party, the SWP's leadership is equally dismissive of the ability of the working class to think for themselves. According to the SWP, workers can only orchestrate a spontaneous non-Socialist response to capitalism. They are perceived as a body lacking a head. And the intellectual leadership of the SWP believes it exists to supply that head. What pompous elitist arrogance! Doesn't all this sound familiar? Consider the following remark taken from a politician of the 1920's:-

Propaganda will consequently have to see that an idea wins supporters, while the organisation must take the greatest care only to make the most valuable elements among the supporters into members. Propaganda does not, therefore, need to rack its brains with the importance of every individual instructed by it, with regard to his ability, capacity and understanding, or character, while the organisation must carefully gather from the mass of these elements those which really make possible the victory of the moment.

Was this thought the sentiment of Lenin or Trotsky? It could have been. But it wasn't. In fact it is the view of Adolf Hitler from his tedious book, **Mein Kampf**, now only read by luckless students of twentieth century history. However, it is a text which finds an echo in the politics of the SWP and a fitting, if ironic, memorial to its later supreme ruler, Tony Cliff.

Workshy Parasites

"*Brown orders crackdown on the workshy*" screams the front page of **The Times** (7 February 2000). However, it is not the capitalist class, those who live on the unearned income from rent, interest and profit that the Chancellor has in mind. Instead it is the young working class resisting Labour's New Deal, a punitive measure to get people between 16 and 25 back into employment. Another case of the Labour government attacking sections of the working class but conveniently ignoring the life of idle luxury of the class they serve so well politically.

COMMODITY FETISHISM

Marx opens up the first volume of **Capital** by stating that the world appears to us as a large collection of commodities. In section 4 of chapter 1 he refers to "*the fetishism of commodities and the secret thereof*" (p 76, Moscow ed).

According to the **Oxford English Dictionary** a "*fetish*" is an "*inanimate object worshipped by primitive peoples for its supposed inherent magical properties*". The **OED**'s definition grasps what Marx has in mind when he applies the word to commodities like a car or a house. Marx uses a religious analogy, arguing that the products of the human brain (God, devil, angels, etc) are accepted as having an independent existence, and, then invested with superhuman powers and worshipped for eternal salvation. According to Professor T Carver (**Texts on Method**, 1977), Marx derived the term "*fetish*" from reading Charles de Brosses' **The Cult of Fetish Gods**.

Look at the glossy magazines published with the Sunday newspapers. Hundreds of advertisements or articles projecting a consumer fantasy world of commodities, life style packages, fashion, interiors, holidays, all manipulating desire and creating in the reader the demand for these commodities. There is a craving to buy, to purchase, and to own. The ultimate manifestation of modern fetish worship is the obsession with money. With money there is no understanding of its social reality as a reflection of class relations and its function as capital in the exploitation of the working class.

In capitalism, social relations between classes are treated as relations between things. Labour power becomes a commodity, a thing or object, which is traded on the market for profit. Commodities appear as "*things*" when in fact they are the result of exploitative social relationships. The "*appearances*" are of competition, of impersonal commodities, while the "*reality*" is class power, class ownership and class privilege.

Capitalism and commodity production give a distorted view of the world as it really is. Not being aware of the social relationships, which underpin the commodity, workers make the same error as a primitive tribe did in investing trees or rocks with magical powers because they did not understand the natural reality behind these phenomena.

Commodities actually signify loss of control over what workers produce. Commodities carry in them an invisible stamp of our wage slavery. "*It is*" writes Marx "*nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumed here, for them, the fantastic form of relation between things*" (**Capital I**, Moscow , p 165). This "*distortion*" of social relations is again commented on by Marx in the third volume of **Capital**:

> *In capital-profit, or still better capital-interest, land-rent, labour-wages, in this economic trinity represented as the connection between the component parts of value and wealth in general and its sources, we have the complete mystification of the capitalist mode of production. The conversion of social relations into things, the direct coalescence of the material production relations with their historical and social determination. It is an enchanted, perverted, topsy-turvy world, in which Monsieur le Capital and Madam la Terre do their ghost walking as social characters and at the same time directly as mere things* (Chapter XLVIII, Penguin ed. p830).

In Socialism products will lose their commodity form, and the social relations of production between people will become as direct and transparent as the forces of nature are to us today.

REST IN PIECES

Capitalism is a vile and unpleasant social system. Increasingly, Midas-like, there is a tendency for it to corrupt and defile every human relationship it touches, reducing the human condition to one of commodity and exchange. So it comes as no surprise to read of the use of human tissue parts from dead corpses in the booming industry of human spare parts.

According to the **Independent on Sunday** (7 May 2000) the cosmetic industry is currently worth hundreds of millions of dollars a year in the US alone. A single body can be worth £70,000 to the industry, and twice as much if the bones are "*harvested*". The report goes on to say: "*Grieving relations are not told of the profit to be made from their loved ones*". Since this industry is using workers' bodies and body parts as raw materials and, as Marx wrote, Capital consists of "dead labour", this development gives a new twist to Marx's meaning.

Professor Arthur Caplow of the University of Pennsylvania's Centre of Bioethics said:

> "*People who donate have no idea that tissue is being processed into products that per gram or per ounce, are in the range of diamonds. They are not told that it will be used for cosmetic purposes rather than life saving. As for those who receive the tissue, it is like eating a hot dog. You can enjoy it, but it's often better not to ask what is in it*".

The Independent on Sunday went on to conclude that some 20,000 dead Americans became the raw materials for this "*ultimate recycling industry*". In 1999, four times as many dead bodies were used for the transplanting of vital organs to keep the rich beautiful and sexually alluring. Glossy sales catalogues display some 650 commodities made from bodies. One corpse can provide material for 100 living patients.

Of course, trade in dead bodies is not new. The voracious appetite of professors of anatomy and students of medicine for corpses in the 19th century led Burke and Hare to set up their enterprising business of transforming the living into the dead for sale at Edinburgh University.

Capitalism's venture into necrophilia for profit has therefore been around for a long time. What is new is the way in which the rich and famous now reconstruct themselves with human tissue matter from the working class dead.

Literature and film give ready-made images of this trade. First, there is Countess Dracula who drank the blood of female victims in her employment in order to keep her youthful looks. Then there is the monster in Mary Shelley's **Frankenstein** put together by bits of human body parts. More recently there is Terry Gilliam's film **Brazil** in which the bodies of the ruling class are constantly being reconstructed by doctors; the joke of the film being that everything is so badly made that after a while even the plastic surgery starts to decompose.

So, next time we are forced to watch on television the rich celebrities receiving their Oscars or attending one of Tony's champagne bashes for the privileged and wealthy, we should carefully study their lips, breasts and ironed-out wrinkles in the sure knowledge that they may well have been enhanced by dead workers who, having been exploited while living, now find themselves adapted into a fashion accessory when dead.

FALSE COMFORT

The economic depression in Japan continues. The unemployment rate at the beginning of 2000 hit a record high of 4.9%. The number of jobless in Japan in February totalled 3.37 million, up 180,000 from the previous month. Keynesian economics was tried and failed. Monetarism was tried and that failed, too.

As a result an increasing number of companies are turning away from Japan's traditional "lifetime *employment culture*" (**Times**, 1 April 2000). Instead they are adopting the aggressive labour market techniques of the US with its delayering , restructuring, and hire and fire philosophy.

Consequently, being in employment is becoming more and more unpleasant as workers face ruthless cost-cutting employers and as high unemployment has made it a buyer's market. Has the worsening economic condition increased the awareness of workers in Japan that capitalism can never be made to work in their interests? Have the numbers of Socialists increased? Regrettably not.

Over the past year, stressed-out office workers in Japan have been flocking to the Hiruma Bar in Tokyo's Ginza district to relax by driving nails into lifelike manikins of their employers.

"*For 4,000 yen, patrons can drink, sing and pound nails into the figure*", explained the Hiruma Bar's owner.

He went on to say:

> *The dolls are about a metre high, and we keep dozens of different types, so customers can select one that looks like their boss. When they've found a suitable one, they place it against a piece of cedar at the back of the bar, then hammer nails through them as hard as they can, while their friends*

and colleagues applaud, and shout abuse at the doll ... By the time the doll falls apart, they've got all their anger out, and can go home to their family (**Private Eye**, 29 October 1999).

Unfortunately, the problem of unemployment still remains. The next day the office workers are back in an alien and discomforting atmosphere of stress, degradation and humiliation.

Taking one's anger out on a doll is the negation of politics. It is illusory to believe directed violence at an inanimate object solves the pressures of being a wage slave.

Becoming a Socialist and taking part in Socialist politics is the real and purposeful response to the day-to-day exploitation and stress workers suffer at the hands of their employers. The 4,000 yen could be better spent on supporting Socialism and not lost on a futile, escapist gesture.

JAPANESE CAPITALISM IN DEPRESSION.

Japan is still in an economic depression. The government has dumped monetarism and returned to Keynsianism. Keynes advocated government spending to side step a depression. Japan has tried Keynes's theory. It hasn't worked.

The government have poured billions of yen into public works in a largely vain attempt to stimulate demand. Spending on airports, dams and roads has only meant a higher public debt. Public debt is now the biggest in the industrial world. The depression still continues (**Times** 09.03.01).

Depressions are a fact of life under capitalism. They are caused by the anarchy of production and the pursuit of profit. to end the trade cycle means to end capitalism. Only the working class can replace production for profit for production for social use. You won't find this fact in economic textbooks.

GRASPING REALITY

Trade unions find it hard to grasp the reality of capitalism. Recently Mr Edmonds of the GMB union complained about the way in which companies were shedding tens of thousands of jobs simply for the sake of higher profit margins.

> *Downsizing*, he said, *is used as a deliberate strategy to increase returns*

Mr Edmonds gave a few examples. Marks and Spencers are to get rid of 6,000 workers. Lloyds TSB is to fire 2,000 employees. Glaxo Wellcome is to lay off 15,000 workers world-wide in the next few years. Royal Dutch Shell was planning to make 18,000 people jobless. 20,000 jobs are to go at Nat West. In all, 72,000 jobs to go since December 1999. Now there is Rover at Long Bridge, Ford at Dagenham. Vauxhall at Luton and what remains of the steel industry in Britain.

Mr Edmonds, like a lot of trade unionists, erroneously believes capitalism is about ensuring fairness and equity in employment. He went on to say:

> *It is obvious that many companies now work for greed over need* (**Independent**, 28 February 2000).

The lesson Mr Edmonds fails to learn is that profit-making is exactly what interests companies. The more profits the better. Employers are not philanthropists. If money can be saved by making workers redundant then so be it. Unfortunately, Mr Edmonds, a paid-up supporter of 'New' Labour has bought the nonsense about *stakeholder capitalism* and a partnership between employers and employees.

The reality is that unions exist because of the class struggle. They exist to protect their members' interests. And they should understand that this goes against the profit-making interests of the capitalists.

THE END OF HISTORY

Following the collapse of the state capitalist regimes of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in 1989-91, Francis Fukuyama expressed the view that this represented "*the end of history*'. In his opinion '*liberal*' capitalism, as it is exists in the United States, Great Britain and most of the advanced capitalist countries, had overcome all its rivals. From that point on capitalism would proceed blissfully on for ever and ever, amen. At that time Fukuyama was employed by the US State Department under George Bush. Therefore it would appear almost certain that he would be overjoyed at this prospect. We may also assume that his views were held widely by the capitalist class and by those employees such as himself who see themselves as having a comfortable niche within capitalism, and that Fukuyama just happened to be the first mouth to utter such an absurdity. Capitalism has yet to have a rival in the sense of an actually existing alternative social system. Its only 'rival' is the alternative which the Socialist Party of Great Britain has put forward for almost a century: the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution. Of this Fukuyama appears either to know nothing or wants to know nothing.

Nevertheless, the idea that there is no alternative to capitalism has taken root to some extent and is an important cause of the apathy and despair that currently affects many workers. Are there individuals who, unlike Fukuyama, realise the evils inherent in capitalism yet still believe it to be impossible to abolish it and replace it with a superior socialist society? The answer is yes. Jeffrey Isaac, who teaches political science at the University of Indiana, has come forward as such a person. In an article "*Intellectuals, Marxism and Politics*", in New Left Review 9 (March-April 2000, pp 111-115) he openly admits that he can envisage no alternative to capitalism. Yet capitalism, for him, is in his own words, the system of "*commodity production, surplus value, exploitation and alienation*", and later he adds "*a system of thoroughgoing, global inequality. As such it is an evil.*" Socialists are in agreement with these points. However,

they are inadequate as an analysis of the system itself. Isaac remarks:

> *"It is too simple to remark that given the history that we have inherited and the world that human beings have created, there exists no credible wholesale alternative to capitalism. The same could be said of water purification, modern medicine, electronic communication, industrial technology with all its wastes and hazards, and also civil liberties and representative government of some sort. These are all historical achievements, products of human agency we cannot imagine transcending Also there exists neither a credible idea of what might replace it nor a substantial portion of humankind committed to any 'universal' alternative to it!*

Here Isaac goes completely off the rails. He goes well beyond even the pessimism expressed by those for whom the end of so-called "*actually existing socialism*" means the "*end of history*". Not all that long ago in the history of humanity, the overwhelming majority was convinced that the world was flat! And how did capitalism come into existence in the first place if a '*credible wholesale alternative*' to feudalism had to actually exist prior to the event? Worse still is his preposterous idea that abolishing capitalism would involve transcending the technological advances made under capitalism. What it will mean is a reassessment of the '*wastes and hazards*' of industrial technology and so on, with a view to minimising these as much as possible while retaining the benefits. The profit motive in the capitalism Isaac insists we must put up with for ever prevents any serious attempt at such a reassessment. As for civil liberties, these will begin in a real sense, not end, with the establishment of Socialism.

We could go on much longer exposing Isaac's absurdities. We conclude with just two points. Firstly, Isaac illustrates again (as if it were necessary) the immense harm done by those (by no means confined to '*communist*' parties)

who have argued that Socialism had already been established in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, paving the way for these despairing philosophies. Secondly, it also shows, yet again, the poverty of thought of most intellectuals. There is more than a suspicion that at the root of Isaac's attitude is an elitist inability to accept that '*ordinary workers*' are capable of acting responsibly to first play their part in establishing and the running of Socialism. A similar attitude abounded in the Fabian Society, whose fallacies were exposed by the SPGB before the absurd doctrine of '*actually existing Socialism*' came on the scene to confuse so many minds.

MARX ON TECHNOLOGY

The media claim that the introduction of information technology and computers will mean less work and increased leisure. This prosaic romanticism should be taken with a pinch of salt. Capitalists do not introduce technology to unburden the stress and discomfort of employment. Technology is used by employers against workers as an aspect of the class struggle.

Marx, whose feet were firmly on the ground and who had a good grasp of what motivates employers, had this to say about technology:

> *The automatic workshop opened its career with acts which were anything but philanthropic. Children were kept at work by means of the whip; they were made an object of traffic and contracts were undertaken with orphanages. All the laws on the apprenticeship of workers were repealed, ... Finally, from 1825 onwards, (the date of the first economic crisis), almost all the new inventions were the result of collisions between the worker and the employer who sought at all costs to depreciate the worker's specialised ability. After each new strike of any importance there appeared a new machine. So little indeed did the worker see in the application of machinery a sort of rehabilitation, ... that in the eighteenth century he resisted for a very long time the incipient domination of automation*
>
> *... In short, with the introduction of machinery the division of labour inside the workshop has increased the task of the worker inside the workshop has been simplified, capital has been concentrated, the human being has been further dismembered* Karl Marx, **The Poverty of Philosophy**. Chapter II The Metaphysics of Political Economy. Moscow edition, 1976, p130.

ARMCHAIR PHILOSOPHERS

"*Philosophers*", wrote Marx, "*have only **interpreted** the world in various ways the point is to change it*" (**Theses on Feuerbach**).

Marx could have been talking about Bertrand Russell. In Russell's book - **The Problems of Philosophy** (1912) - he opens up his account of appearance and reality from "*sitting in a chair, at a table*" while looking "*out of the window*" onto the social and natural world in front of him. Russell starts with detached contemplation and ends with detached contemplation. An accurate definition of the armchair philosopher. The world onto which Russell gazes, the quadrangle at Trinity College, Cambridge, with its elitism, its ruling class, its college servants, its fine wines, and urbane and sophisticated education is left intact. Nothing changes.

Socialists, unlike philosophers, do want to change the world. Changing the world means to actively, consciously and politically take part with other workers to transform society from commodity production and exchange for profit into one based upon common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. In short, changing society from capitalism to Socialism requires effort and commitment.

What constitutes the political activity leading to the revolutionary change from one social system to another? There are sharp differences of political opinion between the capitalist Left (those who claim to be revolutionary) and Socialists.

For the capitalist left political activity consists of slogans, marches and riots. It means attending every strike and every disturbance in the misguided belief that a local incident could be the spark for insurrection, the erection of barricades, the take-over of factories and armed confrontation with the forces of the State. It is a political activity which leads either to a blood bath or to a dictatorship.

We say that a majority of class-conscious workers actively desiring Socialism has to exist before a Socialist revolution is possible. And we say that a revolutionary socialist movement has to gain control of the machinery of government through the ballot. Our activity, unlike the Capitalist Left, is to discuss Socialist ideas with workers and convince them of the necessity for establishing Socialism. Having no reasonable reply to our critique of their politics, the capitalist left write us off as *armchair philosophers*, as though persuading someone to become a Socialist is the same as gazing out of a College window.

So it comes as no surprise to find the Socialist Party of Great Britain being derided by Mr D Devine. He refers to us as *The Special Philosophers of Great Britain* (**Discussion Bulletin**, No 101, May-June 00), although what is so *special* about our *philosophy* he does not say.

Unfortunately for Mr Devine, the armchair is empty. You will see us arguing the Socialist case as and when we can, using every political forum open to us. You will see us debating with the enemies of Socialism. You will see us giving indoor lectures in London. And you will see us at Trade Union meetings, political conferences and public meetings discussing Socialist ideas with the working class and persuading them to become Socialists and to take part in Socialist political action. We are engaged in all this political activity because we are convinced that until there is a Socialist majority actively desiring Socialism then there will be no revolution and no change in society.

The cynical sneer of *armchair philosophers* or *special philosophers* thrown at the Socialist Party of Great Britain show our critics are people neither interested in understanding the world in which we live nor in changing it. Of course, it is easy to ridicule the SPGB's political activity but what practical alternative have these critics to offer in its place. We suggest absolutely nothing.

(This letter was sent by the General Secretary of the Socialist Party of Great Britain to **Discussion Bulletin** in the US.)

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, boasts that one million jobs have been created since Labour took power. In this claim there is an assumption that there is a connection between government economic policy and low unemployment.

However, you have to look at the other side of the coin. How many job losses have there been since 1997?

There have been 246,000 lost jobs in the manufacturing sector alone. By Labour's own admission 54,000 young workers lost jobs in the New Deal. Banking, finance and retail have also seen job losses. Each year more and more state workers are made redundant in central and local government, higher education, the armed services and schools.

The job losses have to be subtracted from the jobs created to give the real number of jobs created during the Labour administration.

The question to ask is whether the jobs created have anything to do with Labour's economic policy. Even in the New Deal it is hard to separate those jobs created by the policy and those by a booming economy. The New Deal Policy can only ever be tested in a recession.

At the tail end of the last conservative government the unemployment levels were falling. Not because of Tory economic management but because of the self-adjusting nature of the economy as it passes through the trade cycle. Labour were fortunate to be elected on the crest of a wave. To date, all previous Labour governments have left power with unemployment higher than when they first came into power.

INTEREST RATES AND RETAIL SALES

The Treasury and the Bank of England erroneously believe interest rates can be raised or lowered at will as part of economic policy. The Utopia all governments want to achieve is crisis-free, long-term, stable growth. The use of interest rates by the Bank, so the Chancellor of the Exchequer assumes, leads to the control of both booms and depressions in the economy thereby setting the foundations of prosperity for all. In his dreams!

The theory behind the policy, accepted by the Labour government and the Opposition, is that a rise in interest rates makes people worse off and therefore causes retail sales to fall. The current boom in sales and house prices has led to calls by some economists and politicians for interest rates to go up. Gordon Brown has also used the threat of interest rates against workers if they continue to successfully struggle for higher wages and salaries.

To show the fallacy of the theory we have taken a period at the end of the 1980's when interest rates rose fast and look at the effect these rises had on the volume of retail sales.

The government's index of the volume of retail sales during the two years 1988 and 1989 (under a Tory administration) shows retail sales rising at a time when interest rates nearly doubled, the exact opposite of the theory held by the Chancellor and his economic advisers. The results are shown in the table below:

Date 1988	**Quarterly Average of Bank's Min. Lending Rate**	**Volume of all retail sales**	**Volume of food sales**
1st quarter	8.5%	100%	100%
2nd quarter	8%	101.5%	101.8%
3rd quarter	10.5%	102.6%	102.2%
4th quarter	13%	103.4%	102.1%

table continued ...

Date 1989	Quarterly Average of Bank's Min. Lending Rate	Volume of all retail sales	Volume of food sales
1st quarter	13%	103.7%	103.1%
2nd quarter	13.5%	106.2%	105.4%
3rd quarter	13.5%	103.9%	105.8%
4th quarter	15%	104.5%	105.8%

Notes

1. The Index of Retail Sales is based on volumes of sales, the effect of price rises having been taken out.

2. The theory held by the Labour government is absurd. When interest rates rise the lenders are as much better off as the borrowers are worse off.

3. Retail sales' volumes went up in 1988-1989 because wages were rising more than prices as they are now in 2001.

4. In May 1988 interest rates went down to 7.1/2% for a brief period.

Concluding Remarks

What did occur after 1989 was a severe economic depression which saw unemployment go up to over 3 million. None of the economists, Treasury officials or Bank of England Board ever saw the economic crisis coming. At the time Nigel Lawson, the then Chancellor, was being hailed in the media as a financial genius for performing an *economic miracle*. Some commentators even speculated that the end of the national debt was in sight and income tax would be abolished.

It all ended in tears, as it will be for the Labour government when the next depression breaks. The truth of the matter is that government economic policy is to all intents and purposes ineffectual against the anarchy of capitalist commodity production and exchange for profit. Events, in fact, control politicians rather than politicians being in control of economic events.

KNOW YOUR INTERESTS

Unilever has just made 25,000 workers redundant worldwide. In Britain the insurance industries are merging and are making workers unemployed. ATM, the communications employer, has announced that they are to sack 1,200 workers. Unemployment is a fact of life under capitalism.

So it is of interest to note the large billboards of the pro-Economic Monetary Union lobby advertising that if Britain left Europe there would be 3 million job losses. The campaign has set out, through scare tactics, to try to unite the interests of workers with the interests of employers predisposed to joining the EMU. Exactly the reverse position is held by those opposed to Britain joining the EMU and others who would even like to break altogether with the European Community. They argue that 3 million jobs would be lost if Britain did joint the EMU.

The real question workers should be asking themselves is why they are vulnerable to unemployment in the first place. Unemployment is of interest to workers but not in the way in which pro- and anti-EMU activists state in their propaganda.

Unemployment exists because employment exists. And employment exists because workers do not own and control the means of production and distribution. Capitalists own the means to create wealth and for the sole purpose of making a profit.

As a class workers are forced to sell their ability to work to employers. In the productive process they are exploited by producing more wealth than they receive in wages and salaries. What workers produce is the property of the capitalist and is sold to realise a profit. If workers are no longer profitable to employ then they are made redundant. Employers also seek to rationalise their workforce and introduce cost-saving machinery. This also creates unemployment. So do the mergers between capitalist companies where work

is duplicated and restructuring makes superfluous workers unemployed. All this happens whether Britain is in the EC or outside, or whether it has joined the EMU or has not.

The issue of unemployment is an issue of class and class relations. The class issue for workers is to recognise that to get rid of the problem of unemployment they first have to abolish capitalism and establish Socialism. To do so requires workers to engage in conscious political action, and to avoid getting enmeshed in the employers' squabble about Europe. Something neither side of the EMU debate want workers to consider.

One thing is certain: whatever the currency used, whether its the '*pound in your pocket*' or that new '*Euro*' thing, most workers will never get enough to satisfy their and their families' needs. The nature of the currency used has nothing to do with the problems of inequality and poverty.

COMPETITION, PROFIT and the FARMING CRISIS.

Britain pioneered the intensification (of farming) ... No European country has pursued it so relentlessly, or has so ruthlessly driven small farmers to the wall to benefit richer ones: more than 330,000 farms - two thirds of the total - have been forced out of business since 1945 ... it was Britain, ... , that pioneered the zero tolerance policy to foot and mouth, originally to protect a few wealthy stock breeders ...

Geoffrey Lean **Independent on Sunday** 4.3.01).

PROBLEMS IN THE WORK PLACE

If you had asked any futurologist 30 years ago what the growth of new technology would mean for the world of employment in years to come, they would have confidently replied. "*Shorter working hours, more leisure time*".

Capitalism promised a brave new world of consumer choice, conspicuous consumption and increased leisure time all on the back of new technology like robotics, computers and Information Technology.

In practice, of course, exactly the opposite has happened. Computers and technology have transformed employment but not in the interest of employees, the working class. These new technologies have done nothing to reduce the stress of employment, rather the reverse. For those in employment, hours are longer than ever despite a legal ceiling of a 48-hour week. Job insecurity is a fact of life; redundancies at BA, and unknown thousands of jobs are to go in the City as a result of mergers. And the stress just keeps on becoming more and more intense, stress reflected in sickness, nervous breakdowns and marriage breakups.

Capitalism is all about making profit. It is antisocial, irrational and anarchic. It is simply more profitable for employers to keep piling extra work onto fewer people. Employers do not employ more people unless there is a very good profitable reason to do so. Individual employers are not particularly interested in the stress of employment if they are able to replace those burnt out at the age of 50 with someone else. For every middle-aged architect no longer able to keep up with the pace in a design office there are plenty of eager and cheaper 25 year olds coming onto the job market.

The government, as ever, does not know what to do. It employs management consultants for fees of £1.5 million to address the issue of stress in employment yet in the same breath embraces the 24-hour economy where government

organisations are to offer round the clock services. The consequence will be late night and weekend work for many employees already under stress through *"de-layering"*, *"flat-structures"* and other reductions in staffing levels.

The priority for the government at local and national level is to cut back the number of employees by making those remaining work harder and longer hours. Unison has already had two successful court actions for stress-related illness against local authorities. More will follow. Yet the reality is that the government has to try to reduce the tax burden of the state for the capitalist class who have to pay for it. Many capitalists need to reinvest capital to compete effectively on the world market and they won't do so if a sizeable amount of their profits is lost in taxation.

Capitalism is shot through with contradictions. Individual employers create employment stress but the bill has to be picked up by the collective capitalist class. The CBI estimates that British business lost £10 bn through absence from work last year; much of it attributed to stress. The capitalist class as a whole have to pay for this cost through taxation, which comes out of profits. It is all a crazy vicious circle, which is what you would expect from a crazy vicious system.

Stress and other problems resulting from employment only exist because the basis of production is profit and the means of production are owned and controlled by the capitalist class. Workers are forced into employment over which they have little control. The work place is an alien environment. Workers have to do as they are told. They are exploited in the productive process and face various degrees of stress and poor working conditions as a consequence of their class position. Trade unions can only ever tackle the effects not the cause of the problems which workers face as a class. Class ownership of the means of production and commodity production for profit is where the cause of workers problems lies.

What workers must come to realise is that there will be no let up in the intensity of stress and the misery stress brings with it until they act in accordance with their own class interests. In becoming class-conscious, they will work together politically to achieve Socialism, seeing the need to bring about a system based on the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distributing wealth by and on behalf of the whole community.

ONLY SOCIALISM CAN ABOLISH POVERTY

Defenders of capitalism praise Tony Blair's claim that he will "*abolish child poverty in 20 years*". He is off to a bad start. More than three million children are still living in poverty on capitalism's own definition (**Child Poverty: An End in Sight,** Child Poverty Action Group 2001).

However, poverty is a class relationship. It is the inability of the working class to enjoy a life of freedom - free from exploitation, free from poverty and free from class privilege. In short, poverty is only abolished with the establishment of common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

"It's no use just making steel we have got to make money. Money is absolutely important all the way through the company" said Sir Brian, pointing to the need to pay for supplies, pay wages, reward shareholders, and reinvest.

Times, 15 February 2001: Sir Brian Moffat, Chairman of Corus.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE THIRD WAY?

The project of a "*third way*" between state capitalism and laissez-faire capitalism has not generated any significant progress. It is a label in search of a theory. A political dead-end.

The failure of state capitalism in Russia and the acknowledgement by the Labour party of the bankruptcy of nationalisation in the rewording of its clause 4, took place simultaneously in an economic crisis, trade depression and mass unemployment.

The problem for Labour and its imitators is that a middle ground has been tried before. The social contract of Callaghan's Labour government in the 1970's ended in disaster. Blair is now saddled with social problems, which will lose him votes. The NHS, for example, is an open-wound. So, too, the unemployment at Ford and in the steel industry.

The result is chaos, instability and lack of social cohesion The destructive forces of capitalism will destroy Labour governments as it has others in the past. The truth of the matter is that capitalist governments cannot meet people's expectations. The political vacuum is being filled by a bleak and corrosive nationalism, xenophobia and racism. Fascism now haunts Europe, in Austria, Belgium, France, Russia, Italy and Germany.

So is there a way out of this mess? Socialists say that there is. And it is for the working class to reject commodity production and exchange, buying and selling, labour markets, wages and salaries, employment and the class relationship between employers and employees. It means the rejection of capitalism in its entirety.

The only way forward is Socialism. The common ownership and democratic control of the means of production by all of society.

CHESHIRE CAT POLITICS

The problem of capitalist politics for Tony Blair, a problem he inherited from Thatcher and Major, is how to impose his political will. There has been a considerable drift of centralisation of political power to the Prime Minister's office as each of the state departments find policy decisions fail once they meet the reality of capitalist society. We have seen this with education, health and industry.

Blair now surrounds himself with policy units each staffed full with his own supporters. They exist to give him the illusion of being able to effortlessly cascade down his orders from the top of the political pyramid to the bottom.

The policy proposals are put in place. They are enacted. Some of them are implemented. However, they then fail. Politicians, particularly prime ministers and government ministers like to consider themselves as all-powerful, to be able to mould events rather than being moulded by them. Unfortunately for politicians they are usually hostages to fortune. The best-laid plans turn into disaster as with Tony Blair's speech to the Women's Institute. Out of the blue there is a crisis. All political victories at an election ultimately end in defeat. Capitalist politics is therefore a politics of failure. Politicians try to deliver success but only manage to deliver failure.

It is important to know why politicians fail. They fail because the system they administer is anarchic and unpredictable. It is shot through with contradictions and conflict. The social problems generated by capitalism are intractable. In dealing with the effects rather than the cause of social problems, politicians are unable to see the wood for the trees. Only a Socialist perspective allows for a correct analysis of capitalism, its problems for the working class and the political solution to them. The Labour Party cannot accept this perspective. To do so would mean to go beyond the wages system,

production for profit and the interests of employers. Labour can never concede the truth about capitalism. That is, capitalism can never be made to work in the interests of all society.

What of the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who is so bound up with the New Labour project with its mantra of *"let's hear no more rubbish about the class war"* (Blair's speech to the Women's Institute)? He is portrayed by his sycophantic admirers in the media as being omnipotent, all-powerful and generally wonderful. The reality is altogether different. He has feet of clay. His speeches are written for him. He has style and design consultants to tell him what to wear. Someone else tells him how to speak with an Oxbridge accent to the City and with an Uxbridge accent to the TUC. *Wonkers* in policy units or think tanks produce his ideas and tell him what to think. In murdering workers abroad in wars he has his confessor to forgive his sins. He even has a hair stylist. Spin-doctors prevent him from making a fool of himself when he opens his mouth. On television or on the radio he is given the questions before he is interviewed. Political thugs like Alistair Campbell, keep lobby journalists in order by feeding them with tit-bits and off-the-record briefings to poison Tony's cabinet colleagues when they get out of line. Take all this away and what is left? A Cheshire cat smile. And, as every reader of **Alice in Wonderland** knows, it is a smile that signifies absolutely nothing.

OUR NEW PAMPHLET

CAPITALISM'S FUTURE

COLLAPSE ?
REFORMED ?
ABOLISHED ?

This includes a reprint of our pamphlet
- WHY CAPITALISM WILL NOT COLLAPSE -
published in 1932.

Post Paid 80p (stamps will do) from our Head Office.

FARMING IN CRISIS

Farming is in crisis. The countryside is full of bankrupt farmers, empty farmhouses and unused agricultural land. Some 22,000 farmers have lost their jobs over the past 18 months alone ((**Newsnight**, 29 February 2000). All this unemployment and millions starve throughout the world because they do not have enough to eat. This is the irrational absurdity of capitalism with its anarchic commodity production and exchange for profit.

The government cannot help. It already pours into agriculture millions of pounds worth of subsidies. All Mr Blair can tell farmers is to compete more efficiently. Although British farming, in terms of profitability, is among the most "*efficient*" in Europe that still did not stop a crisis occurring.

In fact farming is inefficient in the true sense of the word since it is bound up with the profit system. For many decades farming has had the potential to produce enough to feed everyone. However, the very narrow constraints dictated by profit restrict what can be produced. No profit means no production.

All attempts by governments at reforming away the social problems caused by the contradiction within commodity production have ended in failure. In the US foodstuffs, like wheat and fruit, are periodically destroyed. The Economic Community's Common Agricultural Policy is in ruins. CAP cannot be scrapped because of fear of widespread farming bankruptcy and unemployment throughout the EC. The EC stockpiles agricultural produce in an attempt to keep up prices but "*farm gate*" prices continue to fall. It's all a shambles. Just what you would expect from capitalism.

Capitalism goes its own way despite causing suicide and economic ruin. And in so doing it highlights its antisocial nature and why there is an urgent need for the profit system to be replaced with Socialism.

OBITUARY - JAMES D'ARCY

The Socialist movement has been dealt another bitter blow as we regretfully announce the death of Jim D'Arcy. He died unexpectedly on Friday 2nd February in his 82nd year.

He grew up in Glasgow, where his father was a founder member of the Party in 1904, so when he came south to London in the early 1940's he was well equipped to join. He had no hesitation in registering as a conscientious objector during the war, and by various means managed to evade the arms of the law. He was one of a group of young people who joined the party about the same time, and they entered into all aspects of our campaign in the North Paddington constituency during the 1945 General Election. Jim cut his teeth as a speaker in Hyde Park, Woolwich, and subsequently carried the party message to Bristol, Manchester, Nottingham etc. He gave a number of lectures at various branches, represented the party in debate, and served as Branch and Central Organiser for many years. When a considerable amount of maintenance work was necessary at Head Office in 52 Clapham High Street, he was able to contribute much of the materials and labour that made for a more comfortable and efficient use of the premises.

As a member of the Executive Committee he made his mark by never wavering from upholding the Object and Principles of the Party; his strict interpretation of the Party stand on many issues did not earn him popularity status from some members. In fact he was the object of some downright hostility. He did not suffer fools gladly and was not prepared to cut corners for the sake of a quick decision. He wrote for the Socialist Standard, mostly articles dealing with aspects of Marxian economics.

He pulled no punches in opposing those branches who wished to change the name of the party and their misuse of the rules in calling a Party Poll that subsequently gave rise to the expulsion of Camden (Bloomsbury) and NW London branches. He was present at the inaugural meeting on June 11th 1991 when a group of members reconstituted the Socialist Party of Great Britain, and to the time of his death he contributed to all our activities. He was fearless in writing articles for Socialist Studies attacking the Clapham party for some of the dirty tricks they played to try to stop us from carrying on Socialist propaganda, but other articles analysed the problems of

capitalism and debunking the ideas of the so-called '*great men*' like Sir Isaiah Berlin. He wrote our pamphlet - Marxism in the 21st Century - and was delighted with its wider circulation when it was stocked in many of the shops in the Dillon/Waterstone chain. He was still able to speak in Hyde Park and he joked at the difficulty in getting up the steps of the platform. Some of the more persistent hecklers and interrupters at these meetings met the full blast of his cutting sarcasm and wit. He was a regular attender at his branch, where his contributions on various matters, backed up with his wide knowledge of party history, helped in arriving at decisions. A glance at the issues of Socialist Studies since 1991 features his name as a regular speaker at our Sunday lectures, and he gave his last lecture just 10 days before his death.

Although politics played a large part in his life, he had many other interests. His love of music and the ballet ran deep, as did his interest in the theatre. He spent many hours messing about on his boat and making new platforms for outdoor speaking. His wife - Olive - joined the Party not long after he did, and it was a proud moment in his life when his two sons also joined; possibly unique in Party history for a family of four to be members.

How best to sum up his life that he lived to the full. He was a man for all seasons; he was a product of an era long past. He cannot be replaced, and to those of us left, we can only pledge ourselves to continue the work which he did and, importantly, enjoyed doing. To Olive and family, we offer our condolences.

There was a touch of irony at the Crematorium after the funeral. When the flowers, that included a tribute from his Comrades in The Socialist Party of Great Britain were laid on the forecourt, immediately behind on the wall was a plaque in memory of one of the leaders of the old Social Democratic Federation - H M Hyndman - who was responsible for the expulsion from the SDF of those who became founder members of the SPGB. Had we come back to haunt him after nearly 100 years?

LITERATURE AVAILABLE

Socialist Studies - our official journal
Issues Nos: 1 - 39 @ 50p each

Socialist Principles Explained
The Object and Declaration of Principles
25 p.p. Pamphlet 75p

Banking & Credit Myths
A Socialist View 60p

Socialist's Handbook 75p

ALL PRICES ARE INCLUSIVE OF POSTAGE.

Questions of the Day pamphlets: - 50p each

No.1. Inflation: Cause and Effects
No.2. Unemployment and Recessions.
No.3. Marx - Modern History and Economics.
No.4. The Socialist Party of Great Britain and the Trade Unions.
No.5. Why Socialists oppose the Labour Party.
No.6. The Continuing Trade War.

The Materialist Conception of History Price £1
Our pamphlet looks at the theory of the MCH
and relates it to 20th Century Capitalism.
War and Capitalism Price £1
Updated reprint including reference to recent conflicts.
Women and Socialism Price 80p
Marxism in the 21st Century Price £1
A new pamphlet covering essential aspects of Marxian economics.
The Communist Manifesto in the 21st Century Price 80p
Economic Crises. Special Supplement No. 1. Price £1
Economic Crises. Special Supplement No. 2. Price £1
Why Capitalism will not collapse Price 80p

LITERATURE - SPECIAL OFFER

For an in-depth study of the case of
The Socialist Party of Great Britain
we have 3 special offers.

A full set of our journal nos. 1-39 for £7.00.
A complete set of all our pamphlets (17 in all) for £9.50
Or all our journals and pamphlets for only £12.50.

ORDERS TO OUR HEAD OFFICE.
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB
(Please make cheques payable to SOCIALIST STUDIES).
- Postage stamps acceptable for individual items -

SUMMER SCHOOL

SUNDAY 10th JUNE 2001

This is our 10th Summer School and over the years we have dealt with some fundamentals of the Socialist case and various topical issues. On this occasion we shall concentrate on:

10 YEARS OF SOCIALIST ACTIVITY (1991 - 2001)

THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE TO CAPITALISM

FIRST SESSION 12 noon	Our 10 years of Socialist activity in a capitalist economy.	Speaker T. D'Arcy
1.30 - 2.30 p.m.	Light Buffet Luncheon	
SECOND SESSION 2.30 p.m.	There is an alternative to capitalism.	Speaker R. Lloyd

MARCHMONT COMMUNITY CENTRE
62 Marchmont Street, London WC1.
(5 mins. Russell Square Tube Station).
- Admission Free - Question and Discussion periods -

Socialism on the Web

The Socialist Party of Great Britain is currently constructing a web site at www.spgb.org.uk which will be completed early in the new year.

The e-mail address for the party is:
Socialist Party of Great Britain enquiries@spgb.org.uk

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH
meets at 7.30 pm on the second Thursday in the month
at Abbey Community Centre, Belsize Road, London NW6.
Secretary C. May, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road,
London N12 8SB

CAMDEN / BLOOMSBURY BRANCH
meets at 6 pm on the 4th Tuesday of month at
51 Argyle Street, London WC1 (5 mins Kings Cross Tube Station).

All meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome.
Those wishing to find out more about the Party and its activities should contact the Secretary.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to maintain the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interests of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO:
The Socialist Party of Great Britain,
52 Clapham Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

HE SHOULD HAVE READ OUR PAMPHLET CAPITALISM'S FUTURE

'I got it wrong' on the collapse of global capitalism, says Soros

FINANCIAL speculator George Soros feels like an "over-aged prima donna" now that he has wound down his hedge fund operations, he confessed yesterday.

The 70- year-old Hungarian made the admission at a New York seminar where he said he has "egg on his face" after wrongly predicting "the imminent disintegration of the global capitalist system" in his 1998 book The Crisis of Global Capitalism.

"I have always been fallible and I have always acted fallible. If I have a bit of an edge it is because I know what I do not know.

"I did make a mistake predicting a serious calamity. I got a bit carried away. I do not regret writing the book but I do regret that particular paragraph. I got carried away and I have got egg on my face."

Andrew Cave in New York. Daily Telegraph. 23.02.01.

39

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

HEAD OFFICE

71 ASHBOURNE COURT
WOODSIDE PARK ROAD
LONDON N12 8SB

Tel: [redacted]

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by, and in the interests of, the whole community.

Please Reply to:
Head Office

APRIL 2001.

Dear Subscriber,

When I sent you your copy of Socialist Studies No. 38 in December last, my letter also gave details of the subscription rate for the current year:- £3.50 for 4 issues or £4.30 to include a copy of our new pamphlet - Capitalism's future. I know how easy it is to put the letter on one side intending to deal with it in due course, and then it gets overlooked. I'm afraid you have done so, and I shall be glad to receive your sub. Incidentally, the pamphlet has been well received, and is already being stocked by some of the Waterstone/Dillon bookshops.

Although I have not received your remittance, I have pleasure in enclosing your copy of the Spring issue - No. 39 - which I hope you will find interesting and up to its usual high standards. As this issue will circulate during the forthcoming Election, we have decided on a different colour for the cover. We have produced a leaflet for the Election, copy of which I enclose. If you would like some copies for distribution in your area, please let me know.

The Summer issue No. 40 will mark the 10th anniversary of our re-constitution of the S.P.G.B. and should be ready for mailing at the end of June. Articles will review our role as a revolutionary socialist party, our achievements in those 10 years, and a review of some of the fundamentals of our case in answer to critics.

Details of our Summer School can be found in No. 39 when we look forward to seeing you.

I hope to hear from you shortly, and am,

Yours for Socialism,

Cyril E.May. General Secretary.

Cyril E. May

Our Official Journal SOCIALIST STUDIES